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A Dark Side of American History: Executive Order 9066 & Japanese American
Internment During World War II

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the
Requirements for Commonwealth Honors in History

Bridgewater State University

May 12, 2015

Dr. Wing-kai To, Thesis Director
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**A Dark Side of American History: Executive Order
9066 & Japanese American Internment During
World War II**

Kevin Costa

To my grandfather, Anibal Costa,
and all those impacted by World War II

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Introduction

For my Honors Thesis I chose to explore the topic of Japanese American internment because I feel that many parallels can be drawn between this period of United States history and modern-day United States. We, as a country, have made substantial progress in becoming more accepting of diversity; however, we still have a long way to go. While Executive Order 9066 clearly articulated that individuals of Japanese American ancestry were to be sent to detention camps and were therefore stripped of their rights and freedoms, we currently have a sort of unspoken systematic oppression in the United States. Simply put, one's race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and age, amongst other things, still determine how society treats them and the life that they are able to lead.

As a history major, I firmly believe that, in order to continue progress and ensure a positive future, we must learn from the successes and failures of our ancestors. It is evident that Executive Order 9066 and internment was a massive failure by the United States government and we must make it a priority to never let xenophobic sentiments or any form of wartime anxiety cloud our better judgment in the future. It is important to discuss this period in American history because it is essentially an intersection of so

many different issues all in one moment. War, civil rights, Executive Orders, internment, and propaganda are just some of the many topics that are present during World War II and at the time of Japanese American Internment.

In my research I have chosen to explore mostly primary sources so as to understand this period of history more holistically and to establish a stronger personal connection with my research. In addition, the Office of Undergraduate Research and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences funded what I thought was an impossible request to travel to the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California in April of 2015, an unforgettable moment in conducting research. Writing this thesis was a truly rewarding experience and has reaffirmed my decision to pursue a career in law and public service.

Part One: Leading up to Japanese American Internment

December 7th, 1941. The date most Americans will forever remember as “a date which will live in infamy,” had profound impacts for individuals around the world. American soil was just attacked by the Japanese and ultimately left 2,403 Americans dead and 1,178 wounded. Subsequently, the Japanese were declared war on by the United States the following day. Americans and Japanese alike were now being called to defend their country and deliver justice. Perhaps there is no other community at this time that found themselves in a more conflicting predicament than the Japanese American population.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s many Japanese Americans immigrated to the United States in the hope of escaping a recession as well as the changes occurring in Japanese society that were the direct result of the Meiji Restoration. Many of these Japanese Americans immigrated to Hawaii as well as the Western coast of the United States. Kay Uno, a Japanese American who grew up in Los Angeles, was the youngest of 10 children, and discusses how her life and treatment was altered due to her status as a

Japanese American immediately following the Pearl Harbor attack in her essay “Pearl Harbor Remembered” in *Only What we Could Carry*.

Uno was nine years old at the time of the Pearl Harbor Attacks. Her eldest brother and her relatives, excluding her parents and her eight other siblings, all lived in the United States and were becoming increasingly more Americanized. Despite this Americanization, Uno’s parents, unlike Uno and her siblings, felt torn following the Pearl Harbor attack. For Uno’s parents, Japan was their country and they could not even possess citizenship in the United States if they wanted, but for Uno and her siblings, they self-identified as Americans and believed themselves to be fully American, so much so that Uno herself states in response to the attacks, “Oh, those Japs, what are they doing that for?”¹

Prior to the Pearl Harbor attack Uno would walk to her school, which was a mere six blocks away from her house. While Uno had grown accustomed to a pleasant walk with friendly faces, the Monday after Pearl Harbor presented Uno with an unknown and unpleasant situation. This pleasant walk to school now became a walk of shame where she was now being hurled insults such as “There goes that little Jap!”² Once at school, Uno found herself essentially a social pariah and was being shunned by her peers. One cannot help but acknowledge parallels that exist between the stories of individuals like Kay Uno and individuals like the American activist, Ruby Bridges. Both young women

¹ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 31.

² Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 31.

were shunned by members of their society, both young women endured insults and atrocities being hurled at them on their ways to school, and both were members of two different populations within America that did not have their rights and freedoms fully protected by the government.

Kay Uno's testimony on her experience leading up to the eventual Executive Order 9066 from President Roosevelt is one of many testimonies from Japanese American individuals that shed light on the drastic and immediate changes in how American society viewed and treated members of the Japanese American community following the attacks at Pearl Harbor. Were the American people justified in their xenophobic attitudes towards Japanese Americans following these deadly attacks or should the people of America not have immediately come to the conclusion in assuming that all individuals of Japanese ancestry were anti-American and in support of Japan's most recent attack against the United States?

The lives of Kay Uno and Japanese Americans throughout the country were completely altered following Pearl Harbor. Members of the Japanese American community were now being imposed with a strict eight P.M. curfew. As a result of this curfew, another family of Japanese American ancestry moved into Uno's household in order to accommodate for this curfew and the other family's mileage. In addition to this mandated curfew, the Federal Bureau of Investigation came into the Unos' household and went through the Uno family's possessions to determine if there was anything that could find them to be guilty of involvement with the Japanese government and/or Japanese sympathizers. The FBI took all of Uno's brother's model planes away and took her father away based off of an elaborate story of how her father was somehow involved in

the poisoning of an American food chain through an insecticide company and plant signals through farming.

Uno and her family are just one Japanese American family who experienced poor conditions such as these between the Pearl Harbor attack and the eventual internment of Japanese Americans, many other families of Japanese American descent found themselves experiencing conditions that are similar to that of the Unos. Kay Uno had considered herself an American and felt no sense of belonging to Japan. As an individual who classifies herself as an American citizen, Uno found herself utilizing humor and laughter to assist in her coping of the situations arising. “One of these days somebody’s got to write a comedy about these FBI men making up all these stories and trying to find out who this man, my father, is.”³

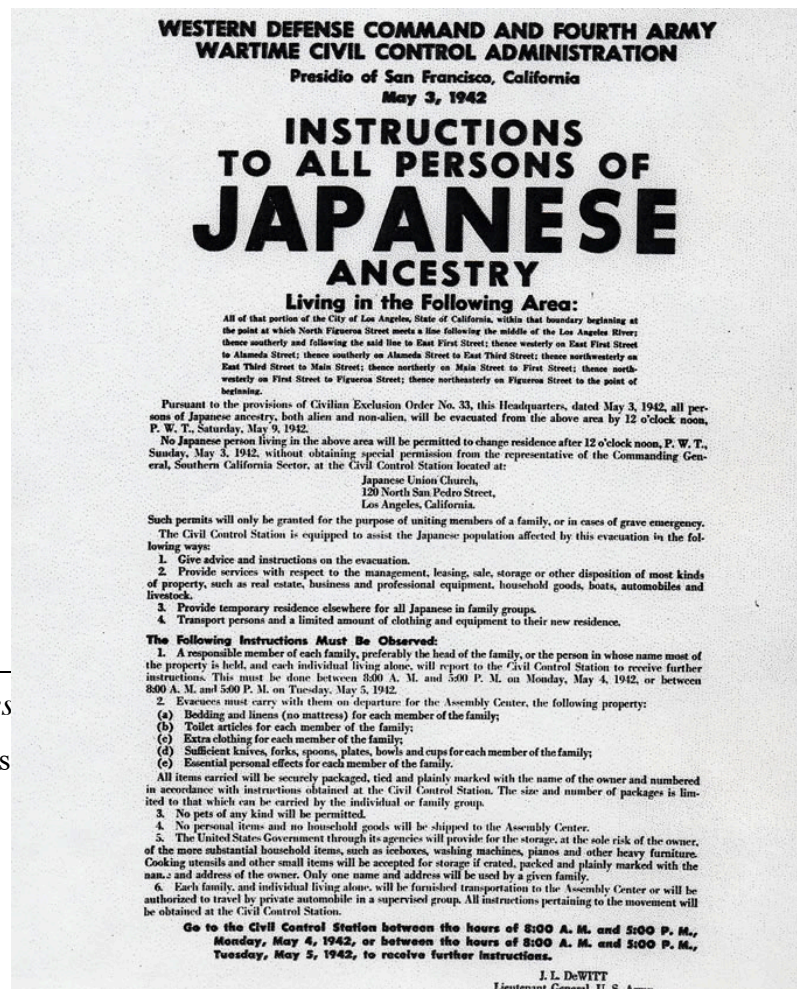
In “Editorials in the Wake of Pearl Harbor” from *Only What We Could Carry*, a story highlighting the immediate change in public opinion towards the Japanese American population is presented. While Kay Uno experienced firsthand a very radical change in the ways she was treated, the editorials believe that Pearl Harbor losses fueled a growing anti-Japanese sentiment that already existed at the time as well as inflammatory remarks towards Japanese Americans. Ultimately, the attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise to the American people, but anti-Japanese sentiments were not surprising. In Gary Okihiro’s *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945*, Okihiro states, “Pearl Harbor merely triggered the gun loading of the

³ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 32.

previous two decades, or, more correctly, of the Anti-Japanese movement that spanned the entire range of a people's history, from plantation to concentration camp."⁴

People's World, Sacramento Bee, and the San Francisco Chronicle were three highly influential newspapers on the Western coast of the United States at the time of the Pearl Harbor attacks. All three of these newspapers were flooded with anti-Japanese beliefs following the attacks and strongly advocated for the evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans across the country. In addition to these three publications, the *Rafu Shimpo* was a Los Angeles newspaper and largely intended for a Japanese American audience. *Rafu Shimpo* was printed entirely in English and had blank pages where the usual Japanese section was printed on the day following the attacks. This was the first of many attempts by the United States government to censor what was being broadcasted to the public at this time.

Following the attacks, Japanese Americans were being imposed with a five-mile travel ban, all of their financial assets being frozen by the United States Treasury, and a curfew



⁴ Okiihiro, Gary Y. *Cane Fires*
Philadelphia: Temple Univers

between the hours of 8 P.M. and 6 P.M. The state of Hawaii, which was approximately 40% Japanese Americans in 1941, simply could not afford to send such a large portion of their population off to internment camps for purely economic reasons. Had Hawaii forcibly removed the Japanese American population from their communities and workplaces, the economy of Hawaii would have been drastically crippled. Although states such as California, Oregon, and Washington eventually sent their Japanese American populations off to internment camps under whereas Japanese Americans on the east coast lived in perpetual fear and those in Hawaii were faced with tremendous restrictions on their daily activities, it was consistent across the board that Japanese American populations throughout the United States were being threatened and were beginning to lose their stability and sense of community.

Ben Iijima discusses his experience and his family's experience following the Pearl Harbor attack up until their eventual internment at the Tanforan Assembly Center, the former Tanforan racetrack in his essay "The Day we Left" from *Only What We Could Carry*. Iijima had to get all materials being brought into the Tanforan Assembly Center approved by the Wartime Civil Control Administration to make sure there was not anything that could pose a potentially problem into the detainee camp. Japanese American families, the Iijimas included, struggled to pack their entire lives into one or two bags to take with them into the camps. Many families simply were unsuccessful in either disposing of their personal belongings properly or packing the items that were necessary for the camps. Many of the gardening tools and heavy equipment of the Iijima family was given to their neighbors. "I remember I had to stand on the curb and pass it to

our neighbors, for technically we were not to leave our residence after [8:00] in the evening.”⁵

One cannot help but imagine themselves to be in Ben Iijima’s shoes whilst reading how he made corduroy sacks to carry his items to the camp, sent his bike away to a government warehouse, and drove away from his home knowing it might be the last time he was ever going to see it. Through Iijima’s testimony as well as the testimonies of the many Japanese Americans preparing to uproot their entire lives in preparation for their relocation to internment camps, one begins to understand just how difficult it was for the Japanese American population to, in the matter of a very short period of time, be shunned by society, forced to abandon all possessions, and be compulsorily removed from your home and brought into an internment camp.

Kay Uno and Ben Iijima provide a perspective of what it was like first-hand as a Japanese American following the Pearl Harbor attacks and the “Editorials in the Wake of Pearl Harbor” documents provide an invaluable glimpse into what the media was presenting to the masses following the attacks, however so many more lives were impacted by this drastic shift in the perception of Japanese Americans, not just those of Japanese American descent. Nellie Wong, daughter to Chinese immigrants, shares her story in “Can’t Tell” and sheds a much-needed light on how relocation left a lasting impact on her as well, a non-Japanese American citizen. “Shortly our Japanese neighbors

⁵ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 4.

vanished and my parents continued to whisper: We are Chinese, we are Chinese.”⁶

Wong’s neighbors had been removed and were now being called the enemy. One can only imagine how difficult it must have been as an Asian American in the United States at a time when LIFE magazine publishes a “How to tell Japs from the Chinese” piece

“How to Tell Japs from the Chinese” from LIFE magazine

if someone is Japanese or

Chinese based off of facial features.



Japanese Americans became the enemy virtually overnight simply because of their resemblance to the actual enemy. Members of the military who were Japanese Americans were dismissed or moved into a segregated unit following Pearl Harbor and businesses such as the Union Pacific Railroad fired Japanese American employees because they were perceived as being “enemy aliens.”

In the time between the attacks on Pearl Harbor and the issuing of Executive Order 9066 by President Roosevelt, ultimately leading to the forced removal of Japanese Americans across the country from their homes and into internment camps, was a time of incredible

⁶ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 52.

uncertainty and hardship for members of this community. This incredibly dark time in American history resulted in the rights and freedoms of an entire race being taken away and, subsequently, treated as criminals. One must wonder: have we truly learned from our mistakes? President Franklin Delano Roosevelt is still regarded as one of the greatest Presidents in United States history yet was the President who signed Executive Order 9066 into effect. The policies and procedures taken by the American government following Pearl Harbor in regards to the Japanese American population should serve as a constant reminder to always protect the rights of each and every American, regardless of the external forces that may be at play.

Part Two: Executive Order 9066 and the Internment Experience

“Now, therefore, by virtue of the authority vested in me as President of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, I hereby authorize and direct the Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate, whenever he or any designated Commander deems such action necessary or desirable, to prescribe military areas in such places and of such extent as he or the appropriate Military Commander may determine, from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restrictions the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion.”

Quote taken from President Roosevelt’s Executive Order 9066 Transcript

Over 110,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes, two-thirds of this number being American citizens following the Pearl Harbor attacks. On February 19th, 1942, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 into effect, providing the Japanese American population of the United States a mere three weeks to “voluntarily” move to areas near the Western Defense Command. Executive Order 9066 placed Japanese Americans in temporary assembly centers and eventually sent to one of the ten internment camps operated by the War Relocation Authority. As alluded to in Part One, one cannot help but question what led President Roosevelt to come to such an extreme conclusion that failed to protect the Japanese American population of the United States. Greg Robinson discusses in his text, *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*, “The full answer is

necessarily complex, and many different elements, such as presidential leadership, administrative style, political calculation, national morale, and wartime propaganda must be explored.”⁷

Through the issuance of Executive Order 9066 on February 19th, 1942, the United States government sent a clear message to its citizens that they were prioritizing the rights and freedoms of the non-Japanese American population over the Japanese American population. The Munson Report plainly articulated that mass incarceration of the Japanese American population was not necessary or suggested, however, due to a rapidly spreading anti-Japanese sentiment and anxiety, the United States government chose to take this measure in order to appease the American public. The internment of over 100,000 Japanese Americans made the American people feel safer, and safety was something now being jeopardized due to the new involvement of America in World War II.

In Part Two, there is a map displaying the locations of the Internment camps put in place during World War II. There were 10 internment camps, originally called “relocation centers,” that were built in California, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, Colorado, and Arkansas. In the Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied*, the conditions of the barracks are described as “tarpaper-covered barracks of simple frame construction without plumbing

⁷ Robinson, Greg. *By Order of the President: FDR and the Internment of Japanese Americans*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001. Page 7.

or cooking facilities of any kind."⁸ The location of the internment camps ranged from complete desert areas in the middle of nowhere to a former racetrack, what was consistent with all, however, was that each camp location was remote and isolated from the rest of society.

As one can imagine, despite the militaristic sense of these internment camps, regularities and routines arose. As Charles Kikuchi discusses in his diary, children could be sent off to schools while adults were given tasks, typically consisting of farming or tending to an aspect of the internment camps itself. The Nisei, or the American citizens in the camps were the only group eligible for paid jobs. This was one of the many reasons, as Kikuchi discusses between the social dynamics that were now beginning to change as a result of camp life. Due to the camps structure, family dynamics were changing due to parents not being able to parent their children as much, and the Nisei were now being presented more opportunities than the Issei, their elders, in regards to job and leadership opportunities. "The traditional structure of the Japanese family, with its emphasis on close bonds and respect for elders, was undermined by the camps' informal social milieu."⁹

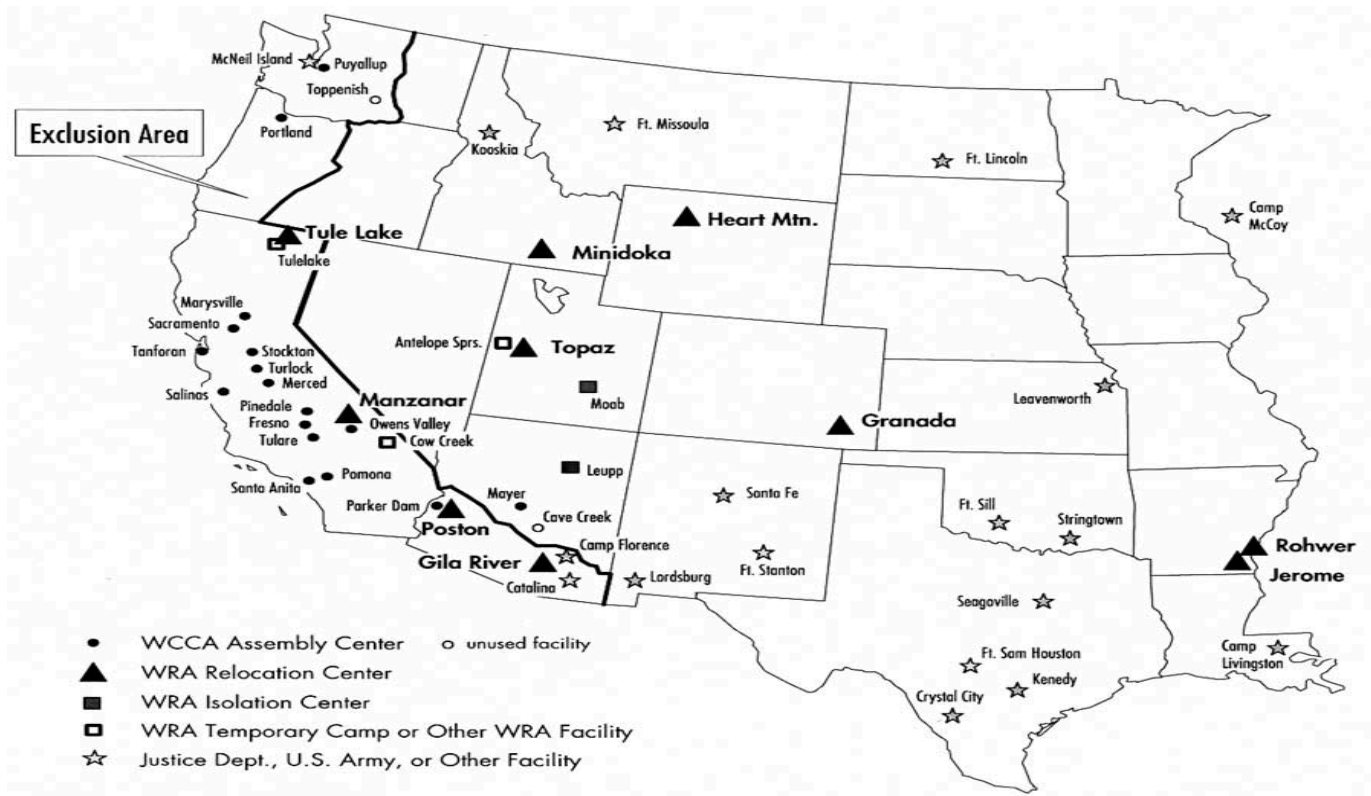
⁸ *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*. Washington, D.C.: Commission :, 1983.

⁹

"Japanese - Behind the Wire - Immigration...- Classroom Presentation | Teacher Resources - Library of Congress." Japanese - Behind the Wire - Immigration...- Classroom Presentation | Teacher Resources - Library of Congress. Accessed May 11, 2015.

The thoughts and concerns of almost the entirety of the Japanese American population on the eve of internment can be understood through Revered Lester Suzuki's sermon, which was delivered to the Los Angeles Japanese Methodist Church on the final Sunday prior to their forced removal. Suzuki's sermon goes as follows:

“We too, as we face an unknown adventure, which will be filled no doubt; with ugly things, with undesirable things, with things that will tend to make us cynical, and antagonistic, and pessimistic, must try to make things beautiful where there is ugliness, love where there is hate, goodness where there is evil...Let us face what comes with courage and faith...”¹⁰



¹⁰ *Japanese American National Museum*. N.d. *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* Exhibition. Los Angeles, California.

Map of Internment Camps during World War II
Photographs courtesy of: <http://resourcesforhistoryteachers.wikispaces.com/USII.17>

The Japanese American population endured countless hardships and injustices during World War II through the restrictions being imposed on them in addition to their forced removal and placement into internment camps. There is perhaps no greater injustice against the Japanese American population than the United State's handling of the Munson Report. Prior to the Pearl Harbor attacks, the United States government saw Japan as an inevitable enemy and no way around eventually being dragged into the world war taking place. For this reason, the United States government wanted to learn more about the Japanese American population, specifically where their loyalties lied and whether or not they posed a threat to wellbeing of the United States.

The Munson Report, when finished, was 29 pages and was brought to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's desk exactly a month prior to the Pearl Harbor attacks that took place in December of 1941. The Munson Report, spearheaded by Curtis Munson, clearly articulated that there was absolutely no military necessity for the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. Furthermore, the Munson Report goes on to state, "For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States...We do not believe that they would be at the least any more disloyal than any other racial group in the United States with whom we went to war."¹¹

¹¹ Niiya, Brian, and Calif Angeles. Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present. New York: Facts on File, 1993. Page 242.

For whatever reason, the United States government chose not only to ignore the suggestions that were presented in the Munson Report, but deliberately took measures to withhold information about the Munson Report and its existence from the American people. Part Three discusses the aftermath of the internment experience for Japanese American individuals. From the many personal accounts from the internment camps, one begins to understand the atrocities these innocent human beings and their families experienced simply because they resembled the enemy. Knowing about the existence of the Munson Report and the details of its contents only further reinforces the belief that internment was, in fact, a wrong decision by the American government following the Pearl Harbor attacks.

Only What We Could Carry possesses several pieces that document individual experiences and reflections on the internment experience. George Saito, a Japanese American, and member of the 100/442nd, was off defending the United States with his brother, Calvin, while the rest of his family was being removed from their households



Members of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team
Photo Courtesy of:

<https://mrhillwikiah3.wikispaces.com/442nd+Regimental+Combat+Team>

and placed in internment camps. In George's "Letter to Father" he informs his father and the rest of his family of his brother's passing in battle. George urges his father not to believe that Calvin died in vain. "Of what I have seen in my travels on our mission I am more than convinced that we've done the right thing in spite of what has happened in the past--America is a damn good country and don't let anyone tell you otherwise--"¹² Three months after George sent this letter to his father, he himself was also killed in battle.

When hearing George Saito's story, one must question whether or not he truly believed his statements on the United States and his brother's death. How is it that Saito is able to justify his brother's death in defending a country that is not even defending the rights and freedoms of his family and all those who shared the same ancestry? Perhaps George wholeheartedly believed in what they were fighting for or perhaps George simply wanted to instill some remnants of hope within his family, who had lost so much already, including George's brother, Calvin.

Charles Kikuchi's diary sheds light on day-to-day life in the Tanforan Assembly Center. A young Japanese American, Charles Kikuchi was finishing up his college degree when the forced removal and placement of Japanese American in internment camps were taking place. Through Kikuchi's diary, the readers learn about the separate bathrooms for "gents" and "colored gents," the inefficient and extremely lacking education system in place in the camps, including the elimination of Japanese language school, as well as stories of boys who tried to escape Tanforan but were ultimately shot while trying to do so.

¹² Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 375.

In addition, Kikuchi discusses his experience as a writer in the local camp newspaper as well as the imposed censorship of what he was able to write in this newspaper. Perhaps the most notable takeaway from the *Kikuchi Diary* is the topic of what it means to be a Japanese American, specifically an Issei and Nisei. Isseis were first-generation Japanese Americans, while Niseis were second-generation Japanese Americans. Throughout the entire diary, the readers get the sense of Kikuchi disassociation with all things Japanese culture. He was in this internment camp because of his heritage as a Japanese American, and yet he found himself to not identify with Japanese culture and would question and condemn aspects of Japanese culture.



Charles Kikuchi and his daughter
 Photo Courtesy of:
http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Charles_Kikuchi/

In the *Kikuchi Diary*, the reader also is able to understand some of the pleasantries the camp experience offered. Kikuchi shares his memories of the Japanese gardens and the baseball fields, two locations in the camp that Kikuchi reflects on in a fond manner. Utilizing his skills in studying social welfare while in college, Kikuchi brings an awareness to how the evacuation and internment process was able to effectively break down Japanese American culture and moral while also serving as a conduit for the weakening familial relationships and discipline within the Japanese American family structure. Since all finances of Japanese Americans were frozen by the United States, in addition to them being placed in internment camps, the typical Japanese American

father's power, Kikuchi's father included, was being diminished. This change in family dynamic was discussed in the diary and Kikuchi acknowledges the impact internment had on the amount of power and influence his father was able to hold over his wife and his children.

Photography was not allowed inside of the internment camps, however, individuals like Miné Okubo found a way around this restriction on visual representations of camp life through her sketches and drawings. Okoku is a well-known prominent figure in regards to the documentation of the internment experience. While at Tanforan, Okoku taught art children and served as the art editor for the camp newspaper. In addition to teaching art, Okoku sought to document and expose the inhumane treatment and poor conditions seen throughout the internment camps. In two of her sketches, Okoku drew the poor conditions in the barracks of the camps, with tall grass sprouting from the wooden floors because they were so poorly made and the unbearable heat and smells those in the barracks were forced to endure. "On warm days it was unbearable in the stalls and barracks. The stench of manure returned with the heat...The warping of the new lumber left cracks in the floor half an inch to an inch wide. Through the racks the tall grass came up."¹³

¹³ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 88-89.



Drawing by Miné Okubo

Drawing taken from *Only What We Could Carry*

It was not until the aftermath of the war when Okubu made her way to New York for a new job when someone suggested that she publish her works from Tanforan into a book. Okubu struggled to publish to publish her book at this time because, much like Kukuchi's experience being censored in the camp newspaper, Okubu found it difficult to find a publisher who would support her shedding light on the realities of the internment camp experience. Columbia University Press eventually published Okubu's work, *Citizen 13660*. The contributions and stories shared through Okubu's work has a historical moment history, for it was the first book published by a Japanese American who endured the internment experience and shared their story.



Photo of the “Queen of Manzanar” at the Japanese American National Museum

While it has been stated that photography was prohibited in the internment camps, there are a great number of photographs taken in the internment camps throughout the United States that aid us greatly in better understanding the overall internment experience. There are photographs of young Japanese American children riding their bikes throughout the camps, photographs of a young women being named the “Queen of Manzanar”, and photographs of the horrific conditions the Japanese

American population were enduring, and photographs that feature additional details of what life was like as an internee. Perhaps the reason why photography was not allowed in the camps was because the United States government did not want this poor treatment and conditions to become public knowledge.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston’s “Farewell to Manzanar” gives a descriptive account of her experience in the Manzanar internment camp in Owens Valley of California. Houston discusses how ill prepared the camps were for their new residents and how disorganized the evacuation and internment process was. Readers are informed about the “Manzanar runs” caused from the shots given to the residents, poor food, and poor sanitation in Manzanar. Houston suggests that the Japanese American community was able to endure these living standards because of the traits acquired from Japanese

American ancestors who were used to a small, crowded community, similar to the country of Japan. Although Japanese Americans may have possessed these traits and accepted this packed living situation, Houston goes on to state, “the entire situation there, especially in the beginning-the packed sleeping quarters, the communal mess halls, the open toilets-all this was an insult to that other, private self, a slap in the face you were powerless to challenge.”¹⁴

In addition to the poor living conditions being faced in the internment camps, the United States government was requiring all Japanese Americans to take a loyalty questionnaire, swearing their unwavering loyalty to the United States, as well as forsaking their perceived loyalty to the Japanese emperor and indicating their willingness to serve in battle for the United States, but in a separate unit located in Europe. All Japanese American men over a certain age who promised their loyalty to the United States would be eligible to fight on behalf of the United States in this segregated unit. Meanwhile, those of German American and Italian American ancestry had no such loyalty questionnaires or segregated units in the military. Questions 27 and 28 on the loyalty questionnaire specifically concerned allegiance to the United State military and willingness to fight for the U.S. Those who said no to both Questions 27 and 28, thus meaning they would not swear complete allegiance to the United States in war, were sent to Tule Lake Camp in California where there was increased security. It was not until January of 1944 when Japanese Americans were once again eligible to be drafted for the United States military.

¹⁴ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 107.

The Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California has a rich collection of photographs from inside the internment camps. In addition, *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II* and *Placing Memory: A Photographic Exploration of Japanese American Internment* have an exceptional collection of photographs that document and forever immortalize this dark moment in history. One is able to learn a great deal through studying diary entries, letters, and other words that document the internment experience, however, one is able to learn just as much, if not more, from the photographs, drawings, videos, and other visual representations of the experience.

“At midday on September 21, 1943, a crowd of about 4,000 gathers at the high school to send off 434 prisoners departing for the Tule Lake Segregation Center in California after the government deemed them “disloyal.”

Photo and Quote Taken from *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II*



15



16

“Young women chat at Bon Odori, a dance ritual performed during Obon, a summertime Buddhist festival commemorating one’s ancestors. Bon Odori was held at Heart Mountain in July 1943 and July 1944.”

Photo and Quote taken from *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II*

¹⁵ Manbo, Bill T., and Eric L. Muller. *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press ;, 2012. Page 13.

¹⁶ Manbo, Bill T., and Eric L. Muller. *Colors of Confinement: Rare Kodachrome Photographs of Japanese American Incarceration in World War II*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press ;, 2012. Page 54.

Part Three: Japanese American Redress and Forced Assimilation

Following World War II Internment, the first population of Japanese American to be resettled were the individuals who were students and those would be able to easily find jobs. Approximately two years after this initial group of Japanese Americans were sent out to resettle, only 1/3 of the population originally in internment camps had resettled, the rest were still in internment camps. One must consider the reasons why this was the circumstance. Many of these individuals had no home or community to go back to and did not want to start a new life in an unfamiliar environment. Between the years of 1945 and 1946, the United States saw a forced assimilation of those remaining in these camps. Having no home, no possessions, and no knowledge whatsoever on how to assimilate back into society, many returned to the west coast, despite the efforts of the United States to make a push for resettlement on the east coast, and ended up in hostels and trailer parks.

Shizu Sue Lofton's testimony was one of the many testimonies of an internee included in the report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which was created by President Carter in 1980 to investigate how this event in our nation's history impacted the Japanese American population and our nation as a whole. Lofton's testimony, which can also be found in the Japanese American National Museum, discusses her assimilation experience and the difficulties she and her family faced in their journey being reintegrated into American society. "We could not get housing. It is critical for anyone, but for Japanese and someone with a child—we have

walked miles and miles every day, dragging Linda here and there, snatching a few hours for a nap here, carrying her there, looking for a place to stay.”¹⁷

Internment did not simply consist of a population of Americans being removed from their homes and forced into camps. The first part of this thesis focused on the initial changes in American society following Pearl Harbor: growing anti-Japanese sentiments, mandated curfews, travel bans, and families leaving their entire lives behind. The second part of this thesis focused primarily on the internment experience. This third part addresses the aftermath of internment, which is more difficult to articulate since American society is still recovering from this moment in history that altered our future and the lives of millions. The multi-generational neighborhoods of Japanese American families were destroyed and this population was scattered across the United States, which was ultimately the goal of the government.

While many stories and testimonies of the internment experience as well as the resettlement experience were being documented following the end of the war, other events that occurred following the end of internment were lawsuits addressing this dark period of American history. Peter Irons, a law historian, explored the legality of certain events that occurred and discovered in 1981 that government lawyers were withholding important evidence during the trials of three different men who, during World War II, argued against the legality of the internment of Japanese Americans as well as the mandated curfew. “The records revealed that fraudulent evidence was used to convict

¹⁷ *Japanese American National Museum*. N.d. Common Ground: The Heart of Community Exhibition. Los Angeles, California.

him [Korematsu] and to justify internment.”¹⁸ The campaign to get the convictions of overturned for these three men, Fred Korematsu, Minoru Yasui, and Gordon Hirabayashi, became known as the *coram nobis* campaign. “The error before us” is what *coram nobis* translate to in law and was a defining in Japanese American redress. Korematsu and Horabayushi’s convictions were overturned. While having these two convictions overturned, as well as the subsequent efforts by the United States government to provide reparations and apologies to those impacted by internment were essentially victories for the Japanese American population, there is truly no way to possibly make up for what the United States government did to these individuals.



Korematsu's Legal Team

Photo Courtesy of:
<http://korematsuinstitute.org/institute/aboutfred/korematsus-legal-team/>

¹⁸ Murray, Alice Yang. *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008. Page 328.

As stated previously, the Munson Report indicated that the internment of Japanese Americans was not only unnecessary, but would a poor idea for the United States government to pursue. It became clear to the United States government during World War II that they were going to need some sort of plan for resettlement and redress following the end of World War II. The goal was widespread scattering and potential resettlement in the Eastern United States. The idea at the time was that, by spreading this population far apart from one another, this would be a great tactic in successfully avoiding public outcry. The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s sparked a desire to revisit the issue of Japanese American Internment during World War II and give the individuals impacted some sort of closure and compensation. The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, initiated by President Carter, looked into the stories of individuals whose lives were impacted by wartime relocation and internment. Some were hesitant in sharing their internment experience for various reasons; however, the commission was able to collect testimonies from over 750 individuals impacted that aided them in putting together a report entitled *Personal Justice Denied*, ultimately leading to the Civil Liberties act of 1988 and reparations of \$20,000, and a public education fund.

Ronald Dellums, a California Congressman shares his support and advocacy for Japanese American redress and reparations of \$20,000 each in “The Total Community.” Internment impacted the entire United States community. Ronald Dellums’s testimony is a great example of the far-reaching impact of internment, affecting populations beyond the Japanese American population of the United States. In “The Total Community,” Dellums is speaking to his fellow political leaders and urging them to support the

aforementioned redress and reparations. Dellums recalls memories of his childhood friend Roland, a young Japanese boy, and how traumatizing it was to witness Roland being taken away. “I would never forget the vision of fear in the eyes of Roland, my friend, and the pain of leaving home...this six-year old black American child screamed back, ‘Don’t take my friend.’”¹⁹ Although Ronald is speaking in support of this bill, he also makes it a point to acknowledge that it is impossible to compensate all those impacted by internment because ultimately the entire country was influenced by internment.

In an attempt to reconcile with their past and move forward with their lives, many individuals who experienced internment camps or had ancestors who did have traveled back to where they were interned. At the entrance of the Japanese American National Museum’s *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* Exhibition is a reconstructed barrack of Heart Mountain Camp in Wyoming. One is able to get a sense of not only what it felt like in this barrack, with little to no privacy and poor conditions, but what it felt like for these people to return to this place where they experienced much suffering and pain. “Going back there helps me define who I am, recharge my batteries, and get a sense on my own identity, I survived there and in some ways I’m a better person and in some ways I’m a lesser person. But I made it somehow.”²⁰ This quote featured at the Japanese American National Museum by Toru Saito expresses Saito’s reasoning for

¹⁹ Inada, Lawson Fusao. *Only What We Could Carry: The Japanese American Internment Experience*. Berkeley, Calif.: Heyday Books ;, 2000. Page 33.

²⁰ *Japanese American National Museum*. N.d. *Common Ground: The Heart of Community* Exhibition. Los Angeles, California.

occasionally returning to the Topaz concentration camp, the camp where he spent his time during the war. America will never be able to fully recover from the damage incurred from Japanese American internment, however, much like the individuals who have returned to the place they themselves or their ancestors were held, we can learn to accept our past, never forget, and to not allow an event such as this to occur in our society again.

Heart Mountain Barrack, Photo taken at the Japanese American National Museum



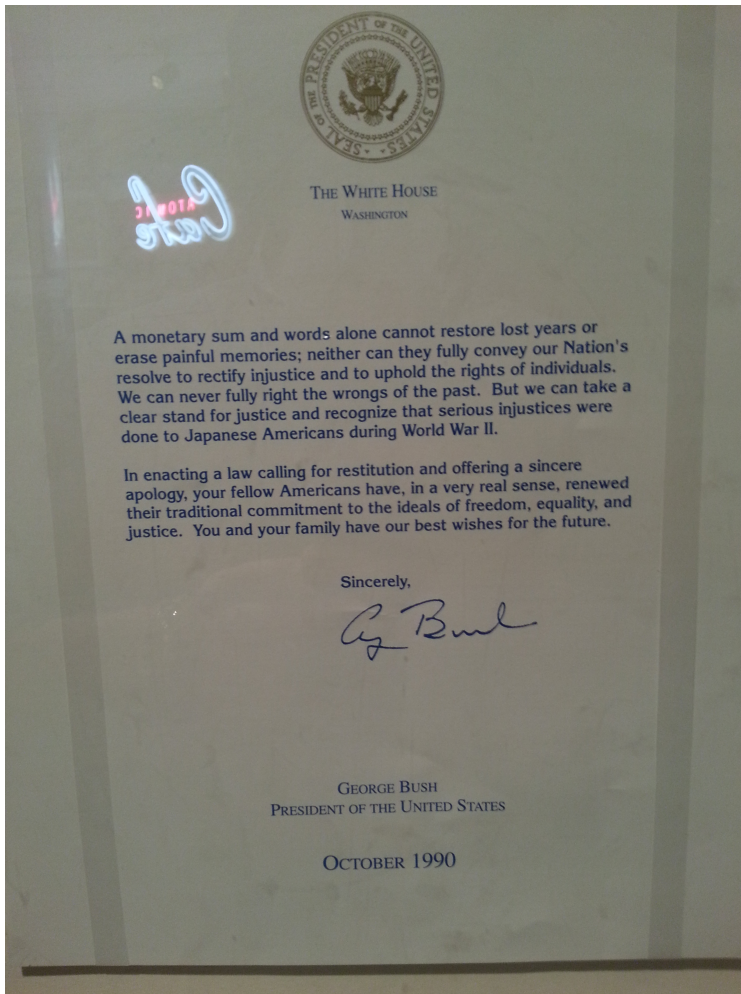


Inside Heart Mountain Barrack, Photo taken at the Japanese American National Museum

The CWRIC presented five recommendations to Congress following the publication of their report, *Personal Justice Denied*. An issuance of a formal apology from Congress and the President, pardons for Japanese American who allegedly violated laws related to internment, reparations of \$20,000 per internee, a foundation to educate society of internment so that the United States would not forget this aspect of U.S. history, and the implementation of agencies to assist Japanese American in “the restitution of positions, status, or entitlements lost.”²¹ Following Ronald Dellums’s urge to support redress and reparations to Congress and the American people, Ronald Reagan signed into effect the Civil Liberties Act, also known as the Redress Bill, in 1988.

²¹ Murray, Alice Yang. *Historical Memories of the Japanese American Internment and the Struggle for Redress*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008. Page 351.

Shortly thereafter, President George W. Bush signed the appropriation bill in 1990, issuing a total of \$20,000 to those sent to internment camps during World War II. On the 50th Anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attacks, President Bush stated “No nation can fully understand itself or find its place in the world if it does not look with clear eyes at all the glories and disgraces of its past...The internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry was a great injustice, and it will never be repeated.”²²



Photograph of President Bush's Letter of Apology
Taken at the Japanese American National Museum

American society has seen tremendous growth in the last century in many different aspects. At the time of the Vietnam War, many Americans were against the United States' involvement in the war, with the Asian American population being included in this group. Also occurring at this time was the third-generation Sansei becoming adults and finding where they fit into American society. In regard to the Asian American

Movement, the Japanese American

²² *Japanese American National Museum*. N.d. Common Ground: The Heart of Community Exhibition. Los Angeles, California.

National Museum states, “The Movement would leave a lasting legacy of political, cultural and social service organizations. Colleges and Universities began offering Asian American studies.”²³ While the United States still has a long way to go in terms of accepting diversity and equitability for all, movements such as the Civil Rights movement and the Asian American movement are hopefully indicative of a future for the United States in which individuals are celebrated for their diversity instead of discriminated against for their differences.

²³ *Japanese American National Museum*. N.d. Common Ground: The Heart of Community Exhibition. Los Angeles, California.

Conclusion

Japanese American Internment and World War II saw the culmination of many different issues in American society. At this time the United States was experiencing war, a lack of civil right for all citizens, the questionable nature of Executive Order 9066, the internment of thousands of Japanese Americans, and propaganda that perpetuated anti-Japanese sentiments. In order to provide a personal dimension to my honors thesis, I have utilized the stories and photographs of civilians impacted by Japanese American internment, in addition to government documents.

By issuing Executive Order 9066 and proceeding forward with the internment of thousands of Japanese Americans, thus ignoring the findings of the Munson Report altogether, the United States government took away the rights and freedoms of these thousands of Japanese American individuals. Historians have made the argument that internment served as way of protecting the Japanese American population from the growing racial prejudices and anti-Japanese sentiments present in American society since the Pearl Harbor attacks, however, was it really all worth it in the end? Is the damage incurred from internment less than what could have been incurred had the Japanese American population been fully functioning members of American society? The answer to both of these questions is no.

Many factors did go into the decision of issuing Executive Order 9066, but it ultimately was the wrong decision, for any decision that is not in the best interest of all American citizens, not just some, is the right decision. Measures have been taken by the United States government to make amends and apologize to all those impacted by internment and apologize for the injustices they had to face, but the reality is that, no

matter what measures are taken or how much is paid in reparation, it is impossible to make up for what the U.S. government did. For this reason, we must let the dark moments in American history, including Japanese American internment, serve as a reminder and guide so we can avoid making similar mistakes in our future.

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